Issues, party and character: the moderating role of ideological thinking on candidate evaluation

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Issues, Party and Character: The Moderating Role of Ideological Thinking on Candidate Evaluation

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We examine 'heuristic' and 'systematic' candidate-appraisal strategies within a presidential election context. Controlling for political knowledge, we determine whether individual differences in the capacity for ideological thought condition voters' reliance on the major determinants of candidate choice, increasing reliance on policy considerations and decreasing reliance on the heuristic cue of party identification and on perceptions of candidate character when ideological capacity is high, and exerting the opposite effect – decreasing the role of issues and increasing the role of party identification and candidate qualities – when such capacity is low. Using American National Election Studies data from the 1984–2000 period, we find that ideological thinking consistently heightens voters' reliance on issues and decreases their reliance on candidate cues, but only among voters who report being concerned about the outcome of the election. In contrast, the effect of partisanship is stable across levels of ideological thinking and concern about the campaign. We discuss the cognitive processes by which ideological thinking regulates political choice, and assert its centrality in the political decision-making process.

The question of ideological thinking in the American electorate has preoccupied political scientists for nearly four decades. Enduring interest in the topic is based on what it implies about citizen competence: in particular, the capacity to comprehend and respond normatively to the character of elite political conflict. Early work on the topic focused on the nature and degree of ideological thinking in the mass public, and on basic conceptual, methodological and epistemological issues.[1] For example, the question of whether levels of policy attitude consistency reflect stable dispositional factors such as education or the changing character of the political environment fuelled debates about its situational sensitivity and malleability over time.[2] More recent work has established the scope and impact of ideological thinking on mass political choice, and identified the dispositional factors that moderate when it is likely to occur. This body of research indicates that strong partisans, the educated, the politically knowledgeable, those with cognitively accessible ideological reference points, and conceptual 'ideologues' – all putative antecedents or

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[1] W. Lance Bennett, 'The Growth of Knowledge in Mass Belief Systems: An Epistemological Critique', *American Journal of Political Science*, 21 (1977), 465–500; Paul R. Hagner and John C. Pierce, 'Levels of Conceptualization and Political Belief Consistency', *Micropolitics*, 2 (1983), 311–48; Robert E. Lane, *Political Ideology* (New York: Free Press, 1962); James A. Stimson, 'Belief Systems, Constraint, and the 1972 Election', *American Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1975), 393–417; John L. Sullivan, James E. Pierson and George E. Marcus, 'Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings', *American Journal of Political Science*, 22 (1978), 233–49; for a review, see Donald R. Kinder, 'Diversity and Complexity in American Public Opinion', in Ada Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1983).

[2] Philip E. Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics', in David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 206–61; Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba and John R. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); Sullivan *et al.* 'Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public'.

indicators of a crystallized ideological outlook – evidence stronger relations between ideological self-identification, on one hand, and policy attitudes,[3] political values,[4] partisan affiliation,[5] candidate evaluation[6] and vote choice,[7] on the other.

One of the major conclusions in this literature is that their capacity for ideological thought conditions how citizens perceive and evaluate objects in the political world. Whereas sophisticates are attuned to the abstract liberal/conservative character of political debate, non-sophisticates respond to political stimuli using simpler and more proximal (i.e., object-specific) considerations. Within the electoral realm, this suggests the existence of systematic differences in the types of information that voters attend to and habitually rely upon in forming their impressions of presidential candidates. In this research, we test a straightforward implication of this idea, variations of which have been hinted at in the literature in political psychology and political behaviour,[8] but never subjected to direct empirical scrutiny. In particular, we examine whether individual differences in ideological thought condition reliance on the major determinants of candidate choice, increasing reliance on policy considerations and decreasing reliance on the heuristic cue of party identification and on perceptions of candidate character when ideological capacity is high, and exerting the opposite effect – decreasing the role of issues and increasing the role of party and candidate qualities – when such capacity is low.

In the next section, we situate this hypothesis within the context of dual-process theories of information processing in social psychology,[9] and within the work on cognitive heuristics and low information rationality in political science.[10] These frameworks provide a strong conceptual basis for understanding when and why citizens will rely on easy-to-use

[3] Robert J. Huckfeldt, Jeffrey Levine, William Morgan and John Sprague, 'Accessibility and the Political Utility of Partisan and Ideological Orientations', *American Journal of Political Science*, 43 (1999), 888–911; William G. Jacoby, 'Ideological Identification and Issue Attitudes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 35 (1991), 178–205.

[4] Paul M. Sniderman, Richard A. Brody and Philip E. Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[5] Huckfeldt *et al*., 'Accessibility and the Political Utility of Partisan and Ideological Orientations'; William G. Jacoby, 'The Impact of Party Identification on Issue Attitudes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 32 (1988), 643–61.

[6] William G. Jacoby, 'Levels of Conceptualization and Reliance on the Liberal–Conservative Continuum', *Journal of Politics*, 48 (1986), 423–32; Kathleen Knight, 'Ideology in the 1980 Election: Ideological Sophistication Does Matter', *Journal of Politics*, 47 (1985), 828–53.

[7] Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996).

[8] Pamela Johnston Conover and Stanley Feldman, 'The Role of Inference in the Perception of Political Candidates', in Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, eds, *Political Cognition: The 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1986); Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics'; Ruth C. Hamill, Milton Lodge and Frederick Blake, 'The Breadth, Depth, and Utility of Class, Partisan, and Ideological Schemata', *American Journal of Political Science*, 29 (1985), 850–70; Jacoby, 'Levels of Conceptualization and Reliance on the Liberal–Conservative Continuum'; Knight, 'Ideology in the 1980 Election'.

[9] Shelly Chaiken, Akiva Liberman and Alice H. Eagly, 'Heuristic and Systematic Information Processing Within and Beyond the Persuasion Context'; in James S. Uleman and Jon A. Bargh, eds, *Unintended Thought* (New York: Guilford, 1989), pp. 212–52; Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, 'The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion', in Leonard Berkowitz, ed., *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (San Diego, Calif.: Academic Press, 1986), Vol. 19, pp. 123–205.

[10] Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957); Arthur Lupia, 'Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 88 (1994), 63–76; Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard

'heuristic' information in their evaluation of candidates (e.g., personality assessments), and when, in contrast, they will rely on more difficult (but highly diagnostic) types of information (i.e., issues).

DUAL-PROCESS THINKING AND CANDIDATE JUDGEMENT

Dual-process theories in social psychology have shown that a wide variety of judgements and decisions are mediated by one of two qualitatively different modes of thinking.[11] When cognitive ability and task motivation are high, judgements are characterized by extensive information processing and high levels of scrutiny to the central merits of an advocacy. In contrast, when ability or motivation is low, judgements are mediated by the use of simple rules of thumb that require less cognitive effort. Importantly, dual-process frameworks posit that information processing is strategic, such that individuals maximize their judgemental confidence by attending to the most diagnostic information when they are sufficiently able and motivated, but switch to less diagnostic but easier-to-process information to achieve confidence when the capacity or motivation for elaborative thought is low.[12]

That differences in cognitive capacity and task motivation induce systematic variation in the use of low-effort and high-effort judgement strategies has direct implications for understanding when different types of electoral judgement strategies may prevail. According to the normative rational voter model, candidate policy stands are the most diagnostic type of information for making electoral choices.[13] Therefore, to maximize the 'rationality' of their candidate impressions, voters should attempt to obtain information about where the candidates stand on the issues, and then calculate the distance between their own positions and those of the candidates. Obtaining such information, however, can be problematic: candidates often have strong incentives to present ambiguous policy positions, and the mass media tend to emphasize non-issue aspects of elections such as candidate image, the 'horse race' and campaign strategy. Thus, information costs associated with the learning of candidate positions and the calculation of issue distances may be prohibitive for many voters.[14] According to low information rationality models,

(F'note continued)

Nisbett and Lee Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980); Samuel Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Sniderman *et al*., *Reasoning and Choice*.

[11] In theory, the two modes form the endpoints of an elaborative processing continuum in which social judgements are based on a mix of low-effort and high-effort processes. See Chaiken *et al*., 'Heuristic and Systematic Information Processing Within and Beyond the Persuasion Context'; Richard E. Petty and Duane T. Wegener, 'The Elaboration Likelihood Model: Current Status and Controversies', in Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope, eds, *Dual Process Theories in Social Psychology* (New York: Guilford, 1999). For a review, see Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope, eds, *Dual Process Theories in Social Psychology* (New York: Guilford, 1999).

[12] The paradigmatic finding in this literature is that in high ability/motivation settings, attitude change is mediated by the effortful processing of the quality of the persuasive arguments, but not by available heuristic cues such as the expertise or attractiveness of the communicator. In contrast, in low ability/motivation settings, heuristic cues but not persuasive arguments mediate persuasion. For a review, see Alice H. Eagly and Shelly Chaiken, *The Psychology of Attitudes* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993).

[13] Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*; James M. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich, *The Spatial Theory of Voting: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981).

[14] R. Michael Alvarez, *Information and Elections* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Pamela Johnston Conover and Stanley Feldman, 'Candidate Perception in an Ambiguous World: Campaigns, Cues, and Inference Processes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 33 (1989), 912–39; Doris A. Graber, *Mass Media*

voters can eschew the difficult calculus of comparative issue proximity by relying instead on cognitive shortcuts or heuristic cues in rendering candidate judgements. In particular, by relying on the standing decision of party identification and on easy-to-use information about candidate character, voters can form meaningful appraisals of the candidates without expending excessive amounts of cognitive energy.

We assume that voters' primary motivational concern in the electoral realm is to form 'accurate' judgements of the candidates – those that square with relevant facts and available information. Whether they accomplish this goal by relying on the high-effort judgement strategy of issue proximity or on a comparatively low-effort strategy involving partisan bias and/or candidate image should depend, *ceteris paribus*, on their ability and motivation to use issue-related information. By definition, 'sophisticated' citizens understand the structural basis of partisan issue conflict, and possess the conceptual skills and contextual information necessary to link policy preferences with electoral choices.[15] Indeed, operationalized as *political knowledge*, several recent studies have demonstrated that sophisticated voters rely more on ideological orientations and issue preferences in making electoral choices than do less sophisticated voters.[16]

However, individual differences in political knowledge may not capture, at least entirely, voters' ability and motivation to engage in issue-based candidate judgement. To be sure, the capacity for ideological thought requires a modicum of knowledge of 'what goes with what'; but information holding and attitude consistency are not isomorphic constructs (as we shall demonstrate), and each may make an independent contribution to voters' reliance on issues in the candidate judgement process. Organizing one's political thought along ideological lines should be particularly helpful in simplifying the process of candidate evaluation by reducing the space of relevant issues (ideally into a single liberal–conservative dimension).[17] In essence, policy-based decision making should pose lower information costs and offer greater rewards in terms of the clarity of candidate choice when the preponderance of the voter's issue preferences are closer to one candidate than to the other. To state the proposition in reverse, voters with ideologically inconsistent policy preferences have some reason to support each of the candidates; these voters should experience greater difficulty and less motivation in choosing between them on the basis of policy. If this is the case, non-ideological voters should pursue other strategies for making meaningful candidate distinctions. In this research, we examine policy-based candidate evaluation contingent on ideological thinking while controlling for individual differences in political knowledge, and directly compare the moderating effects of each type of political sophistication. This strategy allows us to determine empirically the extent to which 'rational' political judgement is rooted in informational (i.e., knowledge) versus ideological consistency considerations.

(F'note continued)
and American Politics (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980); Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Benjamin I. Page, *Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Thomas E. Patterson, *The Mass Media Election* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Kenneth A. Shepsle, 'The Strategy of Ambiguity: Uncertainty and Electoral Competition', *American Political Science Review*, 66 (1972), 555–68.

[15] John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[16] Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, 'The Two Faces of Issue Voting', *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1980), 78–91; Delli Carpini and Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*; Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.

[17] James A. Stimson, 'Belief Systems, Constraint, and the 1972 Election'.

Non-ideological voters, lacking both the requisite capacity and the incentives for systematic issue-based judgement, should fall back on comparatively low-effort cues in distinguishing between the candidates. In this research we focus on two such non-policy alternatives, the heuristic cue of party identification and perceptions of candidate character. First, as numerous scholars have noted, party identification is a standing decision of considerable inferential value, one that provides voters with a simple and readily available yardstick for making electoral choices.[18] Secondly, research indicates that judgements of presidential candidates are strongly rooted in assessments of candidate character. For example, Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk found that references to the personal attributes of the candidates far outnumber references to issues and parties in voters' open-ended comments about the candidates.[19] By relying on assessments of candidate character, non-ideological voters can manage to form electoral judgements via familiar and well-rehearsed routines of impression formation that they employ in everyday life, and that require little in the way of cognitive effort or the capacity for ideological thinking.[20] As Kinder has argued, 'judgments of [candidate] character offer citizens a familiar and convenient way to manage the avalanche of information made available to them each day about public affairs.'[21]

In sum, previous work has amply shown that issues, parties and character assessments play an intimate role in voters' appraisals of presidential candidates in American elections.[22] What has not been established is whether the proclivity to organize the political world along ideological lines systematically stratifies the mass public's reliance on difficult (i.e., issues) vs. easy-to-use information (i.e., party and character).[23] Based on the logic of dual-process thinking, we hypothesize that voters who encounter problems using

[18] Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960); Hamill *et al*., 'The Breadth, Depth, and Utility of Class, Partisan, and Ideological Schemata'; Richard R. Lau and David Redlawsk, 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (2001), 951–71; George E. Marcus, W. Russell Neuman and Michael MacKuen, *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter*; Wendy M. Rahn, 'The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates', *American Journal of Political Science*, 37 (1993), 472–96.

[19] Arthur H. Miller, Martin P. Wattenberg and Oksana Malanchuk, 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates', *American Political Science Review*, 80 (1986), 521–40.

[20] Donald R. Kinder, 'Presidential Character Revisited', in Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, eds, *Political Cognition* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1986), pp. 233–56; Miller *et al*., 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates'; Wendy M. Rahn, John H. Aldrich, Eugene Borgida and John L. Sullivan, 'A Social-Cognitive Model of Candidate Appraisal', in John A. Ferejohn and James H. Kuklinski, eds, *Information and Democratic Processes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 136–59.

[21] Kinder, 'Presidential Character Revisited', p. 235. It has also been argued that personality assessments function 'schematically', allowing voters to make additional inferences about candidate behaviour by relying on implicit cognitive theories associated with the traits of competence, integrity and so on. See Miller *et al*., 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates'; Richard R. Lau, 'Political Schemata, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting Behavior', in Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, eds, *Political Cognition* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1986), pp. 95–126.

[22] Rahn *et al*., 'A Social-Cognitive Model of Candidate Appraisal'; for a review, see Donald R. Kinder, 'Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics', in Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske and Gardner Lindzey, eds, *Handbook of Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), pp. 778–867.

[23] Miller *et al*., 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates', found that education was *positively* associated with mentioning candidate qualities in the NES open-ended likes/dislikes probes. While this finding would appear to contradict our hypothesis, it does not address the question of voters' *reliance* on candidate qualities in judging the candidates. In fact, these authors found that education fails to exert much of a moderating influence in this respect (see Table 7, p. 534).

the difficult calculus of issue proximity to judge the candidates can readily rely on their standing party attachment and their assessments of candidate character. Thus, we expect non-ideological voters to exhibit less systematic but more heuristic processing. Recent work by Lau and Redlawsk suggests another possibility. Using an experimental design and mock campaigns in which information-processing strategies were directly observed, Lau and Redlawsk found that all voters rely on heuristics, but only sophisticated voters make *effective* use of them.[24] That is, only heuristic use among knowledgeable voters produced better quality – i.e., fully informed – decisions. Within the present context, this finding suggests that ideological voters might make better use of all three types of information – issues, parties and character – than non-ideological voters. While the proof is ultimately in the pudding, for three reasons we believe this is unlikely. First, real American presidential elections provide ample cues about party and candidate character, rendering these considerations quite manageable even for uninformed voters. Secondly, if ideological voters achieve sufficient confidence in their electoral judgements on the basis of issues, they may be less motivated to rely on less diagnostic party and character cues. Thirdly, non-ideological voters who are highly concerned about the outcome of the election are especially likely to use available heuristic information, as their motivation to appraise the candidates 'accurately' is high, but their ability to use issues to this end is low.

Using data from the 1984–2000 American National Election Study (ANES), we provide a direct test of this reasoning by examining: (1) whether issue proximity exerts a stronger influence on comparative candidate judgements as the capacity for ideological thought *increases*, and (2) whether party identification and judgements of candidate character exert a stronger influence on candidate judgements as ideological thought *decreases*. Using a standard multi-issue proximity score and controlling for individual differences in political knowledge, we first present separate ordinary least squares (OLS) models of comparative candidate evaluation for each of the five election years, demonstrating that the moderating role of ideological thinking is a highly robust phenomenon.

We also attempt to determine, in so far as it is possible with survey data, whether voters calculate issue proximities or simply infer that Republican candidates hold more conservative policy positions than Democratic candidates. While issue voting is generally characterized in terms of the former, it is not unreasonable to suppose that voters are doing the latter. Indeed, why take the trouble to acquire information piecemeal when it can be had wholesale? As Lau and Redlawsk recently argued: 'Relying on stereotypes or schemata provide[s] an obvious cognitive saving, to the extent that particular attributes (e.g., issue stands) are assumed "by default" rather than learned individually in each specific instance'.[25] As a practical matter, ANES data do not allow us to distinguish strongly between systematic and heuristic information-processing strategies. However, a cornerstone of all dual-process models, one that is well supported by empirical evidence, is that effortful (i.e., systematic) thinking occurs when both cognitive ability and task

[24] This finding is somewhat blurred by the fact that Lau and Redlawsk used a summary measure of heuristic use that combined party, ideology and endorsement heuristics. Thus, the hypothesis that sophisticated voters relied more on one type of cue (e.g., ideology) but less on another (e.g., party) was not tested. Moreover, Lau and Redlawsk found that sophisticated voters make effective use of heuristics only when the mock candidates fit partisan stereotypes. In fact, for non-stereotypic candidates, heuristic use actually *decreased* the likelihood of 'correct' voting among sophisticated voters.

[25] Lau and Redlawsk, 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics', p. 953.

motivation are high.[26] In the present context, ability is captured by ideological thinking, while motivation should be a function of the voter's expressed concern about the outcome of the election. Accordingly, ideological voters who express concern about the election should be the most able and willing to calculate issue distances. In contrast, non-ideological voters should lack the ability, and unconcerned voters should lack the motivation, to engage in this form of effortful thinking. In empirical terms, then, we can infer that voters are engaging in at least some systematic processing if issue-based candidate evaluation is more pronounced when both ideological thinking and concern about the campaign are high, than when either is (or both are) low.

DATA AND MEASURES

Measurement of Ideological Thinking

To assess individual differences in citizens' propensities to employ ideological concepts in their political thinking, we relied on a procedure developed recently by Jacoby.[27] Using Mokken scaling to determine the unidimensionality underlying a set of empirical items, Jacoby found that ideological thinking in the mass public conforms to a cumulative structure, such that political stimuli vary widely in the extent to which the public views them in ideological terms, and that individuals who exhibit ideological thinking on difficult items also exhibit such thinking on all easier items. For example, Jacoby found that correct ideological placement of the parties and candidates (like perceiving the Democratic candidate as more liberal than the Republican candidate) occurs more frequently than consistency between ideological and party identification (for example, being both conservative and Republican), which is more frequent than consistency between ideological identification and specific policy preferences (like being liberal and opposing school prayer). In our view, Jacoby's procedure has two principle virtues as a means of assessing individual differences in the propensity for ideological thought. First, it incorporates variation in both respondents and stimuli, producing an additive index of ideological thinking based on an underlying latent continuum of ideological difficulty. Secondly, it does not privilege any specific type of attitude object in gauging ideological thinking (such as issue consistency), but includes a broad range of objects and judgements, including feelings towards and correct placement of ideological groups, ideological identification and consistency between ideological identification on one hand, and issues, partisanship, candidate evaluation and vote choice on the other.

In the present research, we do not repeat Jacoby's scaling analysis.[28] Instead, we simply used the items employed by Jacoby to calculate individual ideological thinking scores. Three types of items were included in each election year to assess the extent to which respondents judged political stimuli in ideological (liberal–conservative) terms:

[26] For a comprehensive review, see Chaiken and Trope, *Dual Process Model in Social Psychology*. There is also mounting evidence within political science that ability and motivation heighten effortful thinking, e.g., Scott Basinger and Howard Lavine, 'Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice', *American Political Science Review*, 99 (2005), 169–84; Milton Lodge and Charles S. Taber, 'Three Steps Toward a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning', in A. Lupia, M. McCubbins and S. Popkin, eds, *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 183–213; Marcus *et al*., *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*.

[27] William G. Jacoby, 'The Structure of Ideological Thinking in the American Electorate', *American Journal of Political Science*, 39 (1995), 314–35.

[28] Jacoby, 'The Structure of Ideological Thinking in the American Electorate'.

(1) self-identification as liberal or conservative (versus moderate or no identification); (2) feeling close to the consistent ideological group; and (3) consistency between ideological identification on one hand, and party identification, feelings towards ideological groups, and individual policy attitudes on the other (all policy items included in the ANES for a given year were used in the assessment of ideological thinking; see the Appendix for a listing of issues and variable numbers).[29] Individual scores were computed by summing the number of ideologically correct responses.[30]

Measurement of Issue Proximity

We used all pre-election survey issues for which both respondent attitudes and respondent perceptions of the candidates' attitudes were available. A single issue proximity score was constructed for each respondent in each election year by averaging all issues for which the respondent provided a valid response. As is shown in the Appendix, the ANES surveys varied widely over election years in the number of issues that met our two inclusion requirements. This resulted in seven policy issues in 1984 and 1988, four issues in 1992, ten issues in 1996 and nine issues in 2000 (see the Appendix for a listing of the issues and ANES variable numbers). The formula used to construct issue proximity was:

$$(\Sigma|V_{ij} - D_i| - |V_{ij} - R_i|)/n_j,$$

where V_{ij} is voter j's position on issue i, D_i is the mean perception of the Democratic candidate's position on issue i, R_i is the mean perception of the Republican candidate's position on issue i, and n_j is the number of valid policy responses provided by voter j.[31] Using respondents' mean placement of the candidates rather than each respondent's own placement helps to reduce projection effects (i.e., 'projecting' one's own opinion on to the preferred candidate).[32] Issue proximity was coded in all election years such that higher scores represented greater voter issue similarity with the Republican candidate.

[29] We left out the two items dealing with consistency between ideological identification on one hand and candidate evaluation and vote choice on the other, as candidate judgement is the main dependent variable in our analysis. We also excluded correct placement of the parties and candidates on the ideological continuum, as these items pertain to both political knowledge and ideological thinking. Respondents were deemed as having an ideological self-identification if they placed themselves at a non-neutral point along the 7-point scale (i.e., not 4). Respondents felt close to the consistent ideological group if liberals responded as 'feeling close to' liberals but not conservatives, and vice versa for conservatives. Respondents' ideological self-identifications were considered consistent with their partisan identifications and their policy attitudes if their scores were on the same side of the 7-point scales for both items (i.e., 1, 2 or 3 for liberal/Democrat, and 5, 6 or 7 for conservative/Republican). Finally, ideological self-identifications were considered consistent with ideological feelings if respondents felt warmer towards the ideological group to which they identified (i.e., for liberals, if the feeling thermometer score for the group 'liberals' was higher than the feeling thermometer score for the group 'conservatives', and vice versa for conservatives). These codings are identical to those used by Jacoby, 'The Structure of Ideological Thinking in the American Electorate'.

[30] Mean proportional ideological thinking scores (on a transformed 0–1 scale) ranged from 0.26 in 1984 to 0.42 in 2000. Across election years, the 'easiest' item was holding a non-neutral ideological identification, which ranged from 0.48 in 1984 to 0.84 in 2000. The 'hardest' items tended to be consistency between ideological self-identification and individual policy attitudes. For example, in 1984, the mean for consistency between ideology and improving the social and economic status of women was 0.20, and in 1996 the mean for consistency between ideology and abortion was 0.18.

[31] Gregory B. Markus, 'Political Attitudes during an Election Year: A Report on the 1980 NES Panel Study', *American Political Science Review*, 76 (1982), 538–60.

[32] R. Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler, 'Economics, Issues, and the Perot Candidacy: Voter Choice in the 1992 Presidential Election', *American Journal of Political Science*, 39 (1995), 714–44.

Respondents who failed to answer at least half of the issue items in a given election year were excluded from all analyses. This resulted in the exclusion of 6.3 per cent of the sample across election years (rates ranged from 3.4 per cent in 2000 to 10.5 per cent in 1984).

Measurement of Candidate Character

Following Miller *et al.*,[33] we assessed respondents' perceptions of candidate character using the open-ended likes/dislikes probes. The likes/dislikes questions for candidates ask whether 'there is anything in particular about [candidate] that might make you want to vote [FOR or AGAINST] him?' Four follow-up probes are provided ('Anything else?'). Thus, respondents are invited to provide up to five likes and five dislikes for each of the two major-party candidates. In constructing character assessment scores, we used the 'Experience and Ability', 'Leadership Qualities', and 'Personal Qualities', ANES master code categories. These categories capture respondents' open-ended comments about the candidates' personal qualities, including references to whether a candidate is 'dependable', 'trustworthy', 'reliable', 'strong', 'decisive', 'experienced', 'dishonest', and so on.[34] Comparative character assessment scores were constructed by the formula: $(P_R + N_D) - (P_D + N_R)$, where P_R and P_D represent the number of positive comments about the Republican and Democratic candidates, respectively, and N_R and N_D represent the number of negative comments about the Republican and Democratic candidates. Thus, comparative character assessment scores favour the Republican candidate when the number of positive references to the Republican candidate and the number of negative references to the Democratic candidate are high, and favour the Democratic candidate when the number of positive references to the Democratic candidate and the number of negative references to the Republican candidate are high.

RESULTS

Political Knowledge and Ideological Thinking: Separate Constructs?

The concept of 'political sophistication', although rarely defined, is most often operationalized in one of two ways: as objective knowledge about politics and as the consistency of political attitudes.[35] Most of what we know about political sophistication as a moderator variable – for example, increasing resistance to attitude change, reliance on issues in candidate evaluation and on-line information processing – is based on political

[33] Miller *et al.*, 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates'.

[34] Thus, we excluded comments not related to candidate qualities, such as those related to issues, parties and groups (e.g., the master code categories 'Domestic Issues', 'Foreign Issues', 'Group Connections' and 'Government Activity/Philosophy'). These excluded categories included such comments as the candidate was 'too liberal', 'for equality', 'anti government aid', 'pro lower taxes', 'cold war oriented' and 'in favour of broadening of relations with Russia'. We chose to rely on the open-ended likes/dislikes questions to measure candidate character rather than the closed-ended trait questions, as the latter were nearly perfectly collinear with our dependent variable of candidate evaluation. Results using the trait ratings, however, were similar. For highly similar coding methods of perceptions of candidate character using the likes/dislikes questions, see Marcus *et al.*, *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*, and Miller *et al.*, 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates'.

[35] Robert Luskin, 'Measuring Political Sophistication', *American Journal of Political Science*, 31 (1987), 856–99, defines political sophistication as the size, range and level of constraint within a political belief system. However, after examining the effectiveness of several measures, he concludes that political knowledge may represent the best single existing approach.

knowledge.[36] By definition, politically knowledgeable individuals understand the left–right basis of political conflict and are more likely than uninformed individuals to hold ideologically consistent opinions. Before delving into an analysis of the effects of ideological thinking, we should like to determine whether our measure of it is assessing the same latent construct as standard measures of political knowledge. Each of the ANES surveys included a battery of objective knowledge questions, pertaining to jobs held by well-known political figures (such as Margaret Thatcher, Newt Gingrich, Yasser Arafat), the responsibilities of each branch of government (for example, who nominates judges to the federal courts), and party control of Congress (for a listing of the items, see the Appendix). All political knowledge items were scored 1 if correct and 0 if incorrect (or 'don't know'). If items assessing ideological thinking and political knowledge are tapping the same construct – i.e., 'political sophistication' – then it should come as little surprise that ideological voters rely more on issues than non-ideological voters, as we know as much from previous studies of political knowledge. If, however, the two measures are tapping different – if related – constructs, and further, if we control appropriately for the effects of political knowledge and still find that variation in ideological thinking conditions how voters judge candidate, then we should be on to something new.

To determine the underlying structure of our measures of ideological thinking and political knowledge, we use confirmatory factor analysis to test three alternative latent measurement models for each election year. The first model tests whether a single latent 'sophistication' dimension underlies both the knowledge and ideological thinking variables. The second model tests whether the two sets of variables constitute separate latent factors. This model assumes that what people know about politics is not isomorphic with *how* they think about politics. Finally, as these are non-nested models – and thus cannot be compared for fit with an inferential test – we estimated an alternative two-factor model in which the correlation between the latent knowledge and ideological thinking factors is fixed to 1.0. Substantively, fixing this correlation tests whether responses to the two sets of measures derive from the same latent dimension. We then perform $1 - df\ \chi^2$ difference tests to determine whether the two-factor model with the fixed correlation among the latent factors provides a significantly *worse* fit to the data than the two-factor model in which this correlation is freely estimated. This provides a direct test of whether knowledge and ideological thinking are different constructs. We also examine the absolute size of the latent knowledge–consistency correlation to determine the extent to which the two factors are capturing the same information.

The measurement models were calculated using Mplus software,[37] which uses robust weighted least squares to estimate latent factors with observed categorical indicators.[38] Table 1 provides fit statistics for each of the three models for each election year, along with

[36] Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*; Kathleen M. McGraw, Milton Lodge and Patrick Stroh, 'On-Line Processing and Candidate Evaluation: The Effects of Issue Order, Issue Importance, and Sophistication'; *Political Behavior*, 12 (1990), 41–58; Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*; but see Paul Goren, 'Political Sophistication and Policy Reasoning: A Reconsideration', *American Journal of Political Science*, 48 (2004), 462–78.

[37] Linda K. Muthen and B. O. Muthen. *Mplus User's Guide*, 3rd edn (Los Angeles: Muthen & Muthen, 1998–2004.

[38] This estimator describes the effect of the factors on the observed indicators as probit regressions, which are appropriate for categorical variables. Moreover, the *df* for the chi-square is not calculated in the usual way (i.e., number of moments minus number of fixed parameters); rather, it is adjusted so that the *p*-value for the chi-square distribution is correct, see Muthen and Muthen, *Mplus User's Guide*, pp. 358.

TABLE 1 *Confirmatory Factor Analysis Models of Political Knowledge and Ideological Thinking*

	Election				
	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
One-Factor Model					
N	1,989	1,775	2,255	1,534	1,555
χ^2	1,608.23	2,885.25	2,155.75	1,329.06	2,660.31
df	23	69	51	51	73
CFI	0.88	0.85	0.91	0.93	0.79
RMSEA	0.17	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.15
Two-Factor Model†					
N	1,989	1,775	2,255	1,534	1,555
χ^2	737.81	1,381.53	1,542.95	1,295.74	1,868.43
df	28	74	52	51	76
CFI	0.94	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.85
RMSEA	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.12
Two-Factor Model‡					
N	1,989	1,775	2,255	1,534	1,555
χ^2	378.06	700.85	1,254.59	976.14	1,357.12
df	27	72	51	52	75
CFI	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.95	0.90
RMSEA	0.08	0.07	0.10	0.10	0.10
Φ	0.34	0.27	0.33	0.45	0.29
$\chi^2(1)_{\text{difference}}$	262.88*	279.57*	220.45*	217.87*	306.45*

Notes: The χ^2 difference test compares the fit of the two two-factor models, $^*p < 0.001$. †Φ fixed to 1.0. ‡Φ estimated.

the estimated correlation among the latent factors (Φ) and a test of differential fit for the nested two-factor models. As the χ^2 tests are highly sensitive to sample size (and our samples are comparatively large), they do not provide an adequate means of assessing model fit. We therefore employ two alternative fit indices: the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).[39] As can be seen in the top rows of Table 1, the one-factor model provided a poor fit to the data in all election years (for example, average RMSEA = 0.15). Moreover, averaged across elections, only 60.1 per cent of the standardized loadings (not shown) on the single latent factor exceeded 0.70. We can thus reject the hypothesis that political knowledge and ideological thinking are indicators of the same latent 'sophistication' dimension. Turning to the two-factor models – each of which provides a better fit to the data than the one-factor model – we see that model fit is reduced *significantly* when the correlation between the latent knowledge and ideological thinking factors is fixed at 1.0. In particular, the χ^2 difference tests (directly comparing the fit of the two models) are highly significant, indicating that the correlation between the two latent factors is significantly less than 1.0. Indeed, as can be seen in the

[39] Above 0.90 and below 0.10 are considered 'good fit' for the CFI and RMSEA, respectively; Kenneth A. Bollen, *Structural Equations with Latent Variables* (New York: Wiley, 1989); Barbara M. Byrne, *Structural Equation Modeling with LISREL, PRELIS, and SIMPLIS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming* (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1998).

middle of Table 1, the error free correlation (Φ) between the latent knowledge and ideological thinking factors is substantially lower than 1.0; it ranges from 0.27 in 1988, peaks at 0.45 in 1996, and averages 0.35 across the five election years, indicating that the two variables are separate constructs. Finally, unlike the one-factor model, 86.75 per cent of the loadings on the ideological thinking factor exceeded 0.70, and 94.44 per cent of the loadings on the knowledge factor exceeded this threshold (averaged across elections). In sum, given their status as separate – but related – aspects of political sophistication, we control for political knowledge in estimating the moderating effects of ideological thinking on presidential candidate evaluation.

Ideological Thinking and Candidate Evaluation

To test the switching mechanism hypothesis, six interaction terms were constructed. In the first set of terms, ideological thinking scores were multiplied by issue proximity scores, party identification scores and character assessment scores, respectively. The hypothesis that ideological voters rely more on issues than do non-ideological voters is captured by a *positively* signed interaction of issue proximity × ideological thinking, such that the slope for issue proximity increases as the propensity for ideological thinking rises. The complementary hypothesis, that non-ideological voters rely more on party identification and/or on perceptions of candidate character than do ideological voters, is captured by *negatively* signed interactions of partisanship × ideological thinking and perceptions of candidate character × ideological thinking, such that the slopes for partisanship and perceptions of candidate character increase as the propensity for ideological thought *decreases*. To control for the effects of political knowledge, we constructed a second set of interaction terms in which issue proximity, party identification and character assessment were each multiplied by political knowledge scores. Our hypotheses about the moderating effects of ideological thinking are thus net of those attributable to political knowledge. To facilitate a comparison of the coefficients within and between analyses, all variables were recoded to a 0 to 1 scale. Moreover, to ease the interpretation of key interactions and to reduce multicollinearity between individual and cross-product terms, all variables involved in interaction terms (i.e., ideological thinking, political knowledge, issue proximity, party identification, perceptions of candidate character) were centred about their means.[40]

Estimates of the effects on summary candidate evaluation (the thermometer score for the Republican candidate minus the thermometer score for the Democratic candidate, recoded to a 0–1 scale) are shown in Table 2 (we also control for sex, race, education and the number of policy issues for which the respondent provided a valid response). An examination of the coefficients revealed, unsurprisingly, that the conditional effects of partisanship, issue proximity and character assessments (when ideological thinking and political knowledge are at their means, i.e., 0) were significant in every election. The table also reveals that the effects of issue proximity and perceptions of candidate character – but not party identification – are conditioned in almost every election by respondents' propensities for ideological thinking. The coefficient for the issue proximity × ideological thinking interaction term is *positively* signed, statistically significant and quite sizeable in

[40] Leona S. Aiken and Stephen G. West, *Multiple Regression: Testing and Interpreting Interactions* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1991). Also included in the OLS regressions are sex (female = 1; male = 0), race (white = 1; otherwise = 0), and the number of policy issues for which the respondent provided a valid opinion.

TABLE 2 *Summary Candidate Evaluation as a Function of Ideological Thinking, Issue Proximity, Party Identification, Character Assessment and Control Variables*

	Election				
	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Issue Proximity	0.24*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.01)
Party Identification	0.26*** (0.01)	0.28*** (0.01)	0.26*** (0.01)	0.26*** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.01)
Character Assessment	0.69*** (0.03)	0.64*** (0.04)	0.64*** (0.03)	0.67*** (0.03)	0.59*** (0.02)
Female (male = 0; female = 1)	− 0.01 (0.01)	− 0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	− 0.02* (0.01)	− 0.01 (0.01)
White (non-white = 0; white = 1)	0.07*** (0.01)	− 0.02* (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	− 0.01 (0.03)	− 0.01 (0.01)
Education	0.02* (0.01)	− 0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Ideological Thinking	− 0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
Political Knowledge	− 0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	− 0.04*** (0.01)	− 0.02 (0.02)	− 0.015 (0.01)
Ideological Thinking × Character Assessment	− 0.15 (0.09)	− 0.24* (0.11)	− 0.28*** (0.08)	− 0.13 (0.09)	− 0.18* (0.09)
Ideological Thinking × Issue Proximity	0.19*** (0.06)	0.15** (0.06)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.11* (0.06)	0.20** (0.07)
Ideological Thinking × Party Identification	0.06 (0.04)	0.00 (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)
Political Knowledge × Character Assessment	− 0.31*** (0.09)	− 0.32* (0.14)	− 0.34*** (0.10)	− 0.43*** (0.13)	− 0.33** (0.07)
Political Knowledge × Issue Proximity	0.07 (0.05)	0.21** (0.07)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.09 (0.07)	0.16** (0.06)
Political Knowledge × Party Identification	0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	0.06 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Number of valid policy responses	− 0.01 (0.03)	− 0.03 (0.03)	− 0.03 (0.02)	− 0.05 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Constant	0.47*** (0.03)	0.55*** (0.03)	0.49*** (0.02)	0.54*** (0.04)	0.51*** (0.03)
R^2	0.68	0.61	0.62	0.71	0.71
N	1,666	1,551	2,013	1,421	1,443

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

every election. By contrast, the coefficient for the character perception × ideological thinking interaction term is *negatively* signed, statistically significant and sizeable in all but the 1984 and 1996 elections. Finally, ideological thinking utterly failed to stratify the public's reliance on the standing cue of party identification (none of the party identification × ideological thinking interaction terms are significant), indicating that ideological and non-ideological voters rely equally on party identification.[41] Thus, even after controlling rigorously for the effects of political knowledge, ideological voters rely more on issues and less on perceptions of candidate character than do non-ideological voters. As for the conditioning effects of political knowledge, as Table 2 shows, the knowledge × issue proximity interaction was positively signed and significant in just three of the five elections (1988, 1992 and 2000), while the knowledge × character assessment term was negatively signed, significant and sizeable in all of the elections.

Thus far, we have established that ideological voters rely more on issues and less on perceptions of candidate character than non-ideological voters. Does this mean that ideological voters engage in more systematic (and less heuristic) thought than their non-ideological counterparts, or do the two types of voters simply rely on different heuristics (i.e., ideology vs. candidate likeability cues)? Although we cannot resolve this question definitively, dual-process logic states that effortful (i.e., systematic) thinking about issues should be most pronounced when both cognitive ability and task motivation are high. Fortunately, in each election year, the ANES asks the following question: 'Generally speaking, would you say that you personally care a good deal which party wins the presidential election this fall or that you don't care very much which party wins?' This variable should adequately capture voters' motivation to make accurate judgements, and thereby influence the likelihood that they think about issues in a systematic manner. For the 1984–2000 period, a strong majority of respondents (72.5 per cent) professed caring a good deal about the outcome of the election, whereas just over a quarter indicated a lack of concern (in 1996 79.04 per cent of voters expressed a concern about the election outcome; concern was lowest in 1988 at 63.15 per cent).[42] If electoral reliance on issues reflects systematic thinking (at least in part), it should be most pronounced when voters are both able and motivated to calculate candidate issue stands, that is, when both ideological thinking and campaign concern are high.

In Table 3 (low campaign concern) and Table 4 (high campaign concern), we re-estimated the models in Table 2 separately for respondents who 'don't care very much' and those who 'care a great deal' about the election outcome. The OLS estimates in Table 3 indicate that when campaign motivation is low, ideological voters do *not* rely more than non-ideological voters on issues, and they do *not* rely less than non-ideological voters on assessments of candidate character. Only one of the five issue proximity × ideological thinking interaction terms (the 2000 election) and none of the character assessment × ideological thinking interaction terms are significant when campaign motivation is low. Thus, consistent with dual-process logic, voters do not switch from heuristic to systematic criteria if they lack the motivation for effortful thinking. But, given the

[41] The results were highly similar when (a) 'directional' scores were substituted for issue proximity scores, see George Rabinowitz and Stuart MacDonald, 'A Directional Theory of Voting', *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1989), 93–121; (b) strength of party identification was entered into the model, both as 'first-order' effects and as interaction terms with issue proximity, party identification, and perceptions of candidate character. The results are thus highly robust across model specifications and measurement strategies.

[42] These numbers are probably somewhat inflated, given that politics rates fairly low on the interest scales of most Americans.

TABLE 3 *Summary Candidate Evaluation as a Function of Ideological Thinking, Issue Proximity, Party Identification, Character Assessment and Control Variables (Low Campaign Concern)*

	Election					
	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	1984–2000†
Issue Proximity	0.19***	0.13***	0.10***	0.02	0.04	0.12***
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Party Identification	0.19***	0.18***	0.15***	0.18***	0.11***	0.17***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)
Character Assessment	0.60***	0.60***	0.52***	0.64***	0.58***	0.59***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.03)
Female	0.01	− 0.01	0.01	− 0.02	0.01	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.013)	(0.01)	(0.01)
White	0.06***	0.01	0.02*	− 0.01	− 0.01	0.02**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.008)
Education	− 0.01	− 0.03	− 0.02	0.00	− 0.02	− 0.02*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Ideological Thinking	0.01	− 0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.024)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)
Political Knowledge	0.05**	− 0.03	− 0.02	0.01	0.00	0.016
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)
Ideological Thinking × Character Assessment	− 0.13	− 0.05	0.15	− 0.36	− 0.18	− 0.08
	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.10)
Ideological Thinking × Issue Proximity	− 0.04	− 0.01	0.13	− 0.07	0.25	0.07
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.05)
Ideological Thinking × Party Identification	0.19*	0.03	− 0.18*	0.07	− 0.15	0.00
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.04)
Political Knowledge × Character Assessment	− 0.27	− 0.44	− 0.53*	− 0.01	− 0.41	− 0.30**
	(0.16)	(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.27)	(0.25)	(0.10)
Political Knowledge × Issue Proximity	0.10	0.15	0.23*	− 0.09	0.07	0.15**
	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.05)
Political Knowledge × Party Identification	− 0.06	− 0.05	0.10	0.00	− 0.01	− 0.01
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.04)
Number of Valid Policy Responses	0.03	− 0.02	0.03	− 0.17**	0.02	0.00
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Constant	0.47***	0.56***	0.47***	0.65***	0.47***	0.52***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.02)
R^2	0.47	0.34	0.41	0.48	0.43	0.40
N	525	510	431	273	276	2,015

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. †Pooled. The pooled equation also includes four dummy variables for election year, with 1984 as the excluded category.

TABLE 4 *Summary Candidate Evaluation as a Function of Ideological Thinking, Issue Proximity, Party Identification, Character Assessment and Control Variables (High Campaign Concern)*

	Election					
	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	1984–2000†
Issue Proximity	0.25***	0.19***	0.09***	0.19***	0.08***	0.16***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Party Identification	0.28***	0.33***	0.28***	0.27***	0.19***	0.28***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Character Assessment	0.70***	0.61***	0.66***	0.67***	0.58***	0.60***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Female	− 0.015	− 0.01	− 0.01	− 0.02*	− 0.01	− 0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.004)
White	0.06***	0.02	0.03**	− 0.01	− 0.01	0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.014)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	0.03**	− 0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Ideological Thinking	− 0.01	0.01	0.00	0.06***	0.00	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.006)
Political Knowledge	− 0.03**	0.01	− 0.03	− 0.03	− 0.02	− 0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Ideological Thinking × Character Assessment	− 0.17	− 0.31**	− 0.38***	− 0.11	− 0.20*	− 0.23***
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.05)
Ideological Thinking × Issue Proximity	0.30***	0.19**	0.20***	0.07	0.16*	0.22***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.03)
Ideological Thinking × Party Identification	− 0.02	− 0.04	0.11*	0.05	0.08	0.04
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.03)
Political Knowledge × Character Assessment	− 0.31**	− 0.17	− 0.33**	− 0.54***	− 0.32	− 0.39***
	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.08)	(0.05)
Political Knowledge × Issue Proximity	0.01	0.21*	0.17**	0.10	0.16*	0.11***
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.03)
Political Knowledge × Party Identification	0.09*	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.05*
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Number of Valid Policy Responses	− 0.03	− 0.03	− 0.03	− 0.01	− 0.01	− 0.03
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Constant	0.50***	0.53***	0.48***	0.49***	0.52***	0.52***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
R^2	0.73	0.69	0.66	0.73	0.52	0.70
N	1,134	1,020	1,555	1,146	1,161	6,016

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. †Pooled. The pooled equation also includes four dummy variables for election year, with 1984 as the excluded category.

relatively small number of unmotivated voters, perhaps these null results simply reflect a lack of statistical power to detect interactions. We can address this concern by pooling the data across the five elections. Uninterested voters now number more than 2,000, rendering the power issue moot. As can be seen in the rightmost column of Table 3, the pooled results are similar to the disaggregated results: ideological thinking fails to stratify voters' reliance on any of the three major criteria when concern about the campaign is low.

By contrast, as can be seen in Table 4, ideological thinking clearly does stratify voters' reliance on both issues and character assessments when campaign motivation is high. For these motivated voters, all but one of the five issue proximity × ideological thinking interaction terms are significant and positive in sign, and three of the five character assessment × ideological thinking interaction terms are significant and negative in sign. As the table shows, the pooled analysis produces the same result: ideological voters rely more on issues and less on character assessments than do non-ideological voters.

Consistent with a key tenet of dual-process thinking, we find that systematic thought – in this case issue-based candidate evaluation – requires both ability and motivation. Ideological voters rely strongly on issues, but only when they are concerned about the outcome of the election. The interactions also imply the presence of a second, equally interesting pattern about voters' use of heuristics. Specifically, reliance on perceptions of candidate character appears to be strongest among non-ideological voters who are highly concerned about the election (i.e., less able but motivated voters), and lowest among ideological voters who are concerned about the election (i.e., able and motivated voters). Again, this fits easily within the dual-process framework. Highly motivated non-ideological voters are eager to make 'good' decisions, but lack the ability to focus on the most diagnostic information (i.e., issue); therefore, they are especially motivated to make the best use of heuristic information, which is less diagnostic, but easier to acquire and use. Highly motivated ideological voters, in contrast, are able to achieve sufficient decision confidence by relying on issues; therefore, they do not need to rely as much on less diagnostic heuristic cues.

To interpret more precisely the manner in which ideological thinking and concern about the election alter voters' decision calculus, the conditional effects of issue proximity and character assessments on summary candidate judgement (based on the models in Tables 3 and 4) are displayed in Table 5. The table displays the coefficients for these two variables at minimum and maximum levels of ideological thinking for each election year, separately for voters high and low in campaign concern. As the variables all have a 0–1 range (with political knowledge centred at 0), they can be interpreted as the proportion of coverage on the dependent variable (i.e., comparative candidate evaluation) as the predictor variable moves from its minimum to its maximum value, with political knowledge held constant throughout at its mean.[43]

The top rows of the table present the conditional OLS coefficients of issue proximity on candidate evaluation for non-ideological and ideological voters who are unconcerned about the election. The next set of rows present the same effects for voters who are highly

[43] The conditional effects of issues and character at minimum and maximum levels of ideological thinking are based on regression analyses in which ideological thinking is recoded such that a score of 0 corresponds to the minimum or maximum scale score, see Robert J. Friedrich, 'In Defense of Multiplicative Terms in Multiple Regression Equations', *American Journal of Political Science*, 26 (1982), 797–833.

TABLE 5 *Conditional OLS Coefficients for Issue Proximity and Character Assessment at Minimum and Maximum Levels of Ideological Thinking, and at Low and High Levels of Campaign Concern*

	Election					
	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	1984–2000†
Effect of Issue Proximity on Candidate Evaluation						
Low Campaign Concern						
Minimum ideological thinking	0.20	0.13	0.06	0.04	−0.07	0.09
Maximum ideological thinking	0.17	0.13	0.18	−0.03	0.17	0.16
Percentage point difference	−3	0	12	−7	24	7
High Campaign Concern						
Minimum ideological thinking	0.17	0.14	0.04	0.17	0.02	0.07
Maximum ideological thinking	0.46	0.33	0.24	0.24	0.17	0.32
Percentage point difference	29	19	20	7	15	25
Effect of Character Assessment on Candidate Evaluation						
Low Campaign Concern						
Minimum ideological thinking	0.64	0.61	0.48	0.76	0.65	0.63
Maximum ideological thinking	0.51	0.57	0.63	0.40	0.50	0.54
Percentage point difference	7	4	−15	36	15	9
High Campaign Concern						
Minimum ideological thinking	0.74	0.70	0.77	0.69	0.66	0.70
Maximum ideological thinking	0.57	0.39	0.38	0.59	0.49	0.41
Percentage point difference	17	31	39	10	17	29

† Pooled.

concerned about the election. These conditional coefficients indicate that the effect for issues is considerably larger among voters who parse the political world in ideological terms than among those who do not, but this difference is substantial only among highly motivated voters (i.e., those concerned about the election). Averaged across elections, candidate evaluation scores among highly concerned voters ranged across 28.4 per cent of the scale (i.e., a coefficient of 0.284) as a function of issue proximity when ideological thinking was at its maximum (controlling for the other variables in the model). By contrast,

candidate evaluation scores ranged across just 10.8 per cent of the scale as a function of issue proximity when ideological thinking was at its minimum. This represents a decline of 17.6 percentage points. The effect for pooled data among motivated voters is even larger: As the far-right column shows, candidate evaluation scores range across 32.0 per cent of the scale as a function of issue proximity at maximum ideological thinking, but ranged across just 7.0 per cent of the scale at minimum ideological thinking (a decline of 25 percentage points). Among unmotivated voters, the differential effect of issues is much smaller: candidate evaluation scores ranged across 12.4 per cent of the scale as a function of issue proximity for ideological voters, and 7.4 per cent of the scale for non-ideological voters (a difference of just 5.2 percentage points).

The bottom part of Table 5 shows the conditional effects of perceptions of candidate character on candidate evaluation. As for issue proximity, differential reliance on character across levels of ideological thinking is considerably stronger among motivated than unmotivated voters. Now, however, it is non-ideological voters who exhibit the stronger effects. Among voters who are concerned about the election, there is a sharp *increase* in the reliance on assessments of candidate character as ideological thinking declines. Averaged across elections, candidate evaluation scores ranged across 71.2 and 48.4 per cent of the scale as a function of character assessment for non-ideological and ideological voters, respectively, a decline of 22.8 percentage points (the pooled effects are similar, at 70 and 41 per cent, respectively, a 29 percentage point difference). Among voters who are unconcerned about the election, candidate evaluation scores ranged across 62.8 and 52.2 per cent of the scale as a function of character assessment for non-ideological and ideological voters, respectively, a decline of just 10.6 percentage points. The pooled difference (across non-ideological and ideological voters) was even smaller, at 9 percentage points.

In sum, among unmotivated voters, ideological thinking makes little difference; character judgements dominate and issues make little impact, even when ideological thinking is high. However, among voters who profess concern about the outcome of the election – and who are thus motivated to devote more sustained thought to the appraisal task – ideological thinking matters a great deal. Among maximally ideological voters, issues, character assessments and partisanship exert roughly equal weight in rendering candidate judgements. To be sure, these voters do not abandon the yardstick of standing party preference or the notion that character perceptions are an important normative consideration in making such decisions. However, ideological voters strongly supplement their stable political reference points and personality assessments with assessments of the candidates' policy positions. When ideological thinking falls to its minimum, voters rely heavily on character assessments and precious little on issues. In contrast to the large shifts in both issues and character, the effect of party identification is remarkably stable across levels of ideological thinking, and, to a lesser extent, across levels of concern about the election.

CONCLUSION

The question of ideological thinking is a longstanding and central concern in political science. The public's awareness of the left–right structure of political conflict is a primary marker of its political competence, with direct and even profound implications for communication and influence processes between elites and the mass public. According to major reviews on the topic, the distribution question is largely settled: the American

electorate is neither super-sophisticated nor is it abysmally ignorant.[44] But as we demonstrate, neither is it homogeneous. Some individuals, too few, to be sure, think abstractly about politics and form policy attitudes and other political beliefs that cohere both with their abstract ideological identifications and with each other. A great many others parse the political world through narrow and object-specific lenses and exhibit very little ideological organization among their opinions.

But this appears to be changing, as ideological thinking scores have risen steadily from a low of 0.26 in 1984 (on the 0 to 1 scale) to a high of 0.42 in 2000. At first glance, this would appear to contradict the perception that Reagan and Mondale ran more polarized campaigns than Bush and Gore, both of whom presented themselves to voters as centrists. However, there has been a steady ideological polarization of the parties since the early 1980s, and scholars have shown that this polarization at the elite level has clarified partisan distinctions for the mass public.[45] For example, Hetherington has demonstrated that increases in both the perceived ideological distance between the parties and the strength of partisan orientations are a function of increasing elite party polarization (based on DW-nominate scores, which are ideal point estimates concerning ideology, of roll-call votes in the US House of Representatives) beginning in 1984. He notes that, 'As parties in Congress have become more polarized along party lines, people have become more inclined to see important differences between the parties, place them correctly in an ideological space, and perceive a wider ideological distance between them'.[46] That levels of mass ideological thinking have also increased during this period dovetails nicely with *The Changing American Voter*'s environmental thesis and with elite behaviour theories of public opinion change.[47]

In this research, we tested the proposition that ideological thinking increases the extent to which voters use issues and decreases the extent to which they use party identification and assessments of candidate character in forming electoral preferences. Based on dual-process theories in social psychology and low information rationality models in political science, our perspective is that voters approach the task of candidate judgement strategically, focusing on those criteria that allow them to make the most reasonably informed electoral choices.[48] Ideologically-minded voters understand the structural basis of partisan political conflict, including its manifestation in the realm of policy issues. Ideological voters should therefore have little cognitive difficulty in using issue information to render candidate judgements. For non-ideological voters – those for whom

[44] Richard Niemi and Herbert F. Weisberg, eds, *Classics in Voting Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993), p. 50; Philip E. Converse, 'Assessing the Capacity of Mass Electorates', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3 (2000), 331–53.

[45] Marc J. Hetherington, 'Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization', *American Political Science Review*, 95 (2001), 619–31; Alan Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, 'Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate', *Journal of Politics*, 60 (1988), 634–52. In addition to the influence of political context on levels of ideological thinking, both dispositional factors (e.g., cognitive ability) and dispositional × context interactions are also important. For example, Hetherington found that the effect of elite polarization on ideological perceptions of the parties was stronger among the educated, who are better equipped to apprehend and respond to changes in the political environment.

[46] Hetherington, 'Resurgent Mass Partisanship', p. 624.

[47] Edward Carmines and James Stimson, *Issue Evolution Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Nie *et al*., *The Changing American Voter;* Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.

[48] Chaiken and Trope, *Dual Process Theories in Social Psychology*; Lupia and McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma*; Petty and Wegener, 'The Elaboration Likelihood Model'; Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter*; Sniderman *et al*., *Reasoning and Choice*.

the organizing principle of the liberal–conservative continuum is not an available cognitive construct – the information costs associated with learning the candidates' issue positions and calculating issue distances are prohibitive. We hypothesize that these voters rely on simpler criteria in rendering candidate judgements. In particular, we examined whether these voters rely instead on the heuristic cue of party identification and on easy-to-process information about candidate character. Our hypotheses received considerable empirical support. Ideological voters relied substantially more on policy and substantially less on character judgements in forming appraisals of presidential candidates than did their non-ideological counterparts. Moreover, these effects were large in magnitude, and generally consistent across elections from 1984 to 2000.

One of the interesting questions about issue-based candidate evaluation among ideological voters is whether it occurs via a heuristic process, in which Republican candidates are simply assumed to hold more conservative issue preferences than Democratic candidates, or via a Downs-like systematic process, in which voters actually calculate issue proximities. We acknowledge that survey data are not ideally suited to deciphering the cognitive processes that underlie electoral decision making. That said, by using voters' professed concern about the election as a measure of their motivation for effortful thought, we believe we have gained some traction on the 'process' question. Consistent with a large body of evidence from dual-process studies, our results indicate that systematic issue-based candidate judgement is evident in substantial amounts only when both ability and motivation are high. Moreover, ideological thinking conditioned voters' reliance on character assessment much more strongly when motivation (*qua* campaign concern) was high than when it was low. This finding also comports with the motivational aspect of dual process models among low ability individuals. That is, voters who are highly concerned about the election but lack the use of an ideological lens are eager to make 'good' decisions, but lack the wherewithal to make issue-based distinctions between the candidates; thus, they increase their reliance on easy-to-use heuristic information about candidate character. Finally, highly motivated ideological voters make the least use of character information; they simply do not need it as much to achieve confidence in their electoral judgements, as they can make full use of more diagnostic information about issues.

We had also predicted that the standing heuristic cue of party identification would provide a stronger crutch for non-ideological than ideological voters. This turned out not to be the case; the two types of voters relied equally on party identification. We can think of two explanations for this non-moderated effect. First, in line with the classical conception of party identification stemming from *The American Voter*, partisanship may provide an enduring social identity in the political realm, providing a basic judgemental anchor for both sophisticated and non-sophisticated voters. A more interesting possibility is that partisanship functions differently depending on level of sophistication. As Fiorina and other revisionists have claimed, party identification represents a 'running tally' of party performance; in this conception, partisanship is more fluid and more susceptible to contemporary evaluations of party leaders, platforms and performance than the earlier model of group identity and party loyalty.[49] It also requires more cognitive effort. While

[49] Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist and Eric Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002); Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Election* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Charles Franklin and John E. Jackson, 'The Dynamics of Party Identification', *American Political Science Review*, 77 (1983), 957–73; Michael MacKuen, Robert S. Erikson and James A. Stimson. 'Macropartisanship', *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1989), 1125–242.

this is mere speculation, we suggest that both conceptions of party identification may be true, but for different voters. The 'data-driven' model of party identification might be more applicable to sophisticated voters, who are in a better position to manage the stream of political events and maintain updated running tallies of party performance. By contrast, the heuristic or 'theory-driven' classical conceptualization may provide a better fit to non-sophisticated voters. Thus, sophisticated and non-sophisticated voters may be using party identification equally, though in different ways.

One important implication of these results is captured by the distinct roles that issues and candidates play in the candidate evaluation process. In particular, while policy opinions are by no means entirely stable constructs,[50] it is the changing cast of presidential candidates that provides the dynamism in American electoral politics.[51] From this perspective, the electoral success of the Republican party over the last half century can be attributed to their nomination of better-liked candidates. As we have shown here, that dynamism – in character-based electoral judgement – is provided disproportionately by ideologically innocent voters. Thus, the short-term factors that tip presidential elections would seem to be driven largely by that segment of the electorate that fails to appreciate the liberal–conservative structure of politics.

This is not to say that candidate judgement strategies among non-ideological voters are irrational. First, given their limited ability to comprehend the left–right nature of political competition, such voters are arguably acting quite rationally in shifting their attention away from the complicated calculus of issue distances – which our results suggest require at least a modicum of ideological awareness and task motivation – and towards the more familiar and well-rehearsed routine of personality impression formation. Secondly, as previous research has shown, such candidate assessments are not based on irrelevant aspects of character such as attractiveness or physical stature.[52] Rather, they centre on highly relevant character themes, such as the candidate's perceived competence, integrity and leadership qualities. In sum, this flexibility provides ideological and non-ideological voters alike with the tools to appraise presidential candidates meaningfully and make informed political choices.

APPENDIX

Issues included in the measurement of ideological thinking, issue proximity, and political knowledge by election (1984–2000). Issues included in issue proximity scores are asterisked.

1984

v375:	Government services/spending*
v382:	Minority aid*
v388:	Involvement in Central America*
v395:	Defence spending*
v401:	Social/economic status of women*

[50] Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics'; Stanley Feldman, 'Measuring Issue Preferences: The Problem of Response Instability', *Political Analysis*, 1 (1989), 25–60.

[51] Donald E. Stokes, 'Some Dynamic Elements in Contests for the Presidency', *American Political Science Review*, 60 (1966), 19–28.

[52] Kinder, 'Presidential Character Revisited'; Markus, 'Political Attitudes during an Election Year'; Miller *et al.*, 'Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates'; Samuel Popkin, John W. Gorman, Charles Phillips and Jeffrey A. Smith, 'Comment: What Have You Done for Me Lately? Toward an Investment Theory of Voting', *American Political Science Review*, 70 (1976), 779–805.

v408: Co-operating with Russia*
v414: Job assurance*
v423: Abortion
v1038: School prayer

Political Knowledge
v1006: Does R know which party had most members in the US House before the election?
v1007: Does R know, as a result of the election, which party has the most members in the US House?
v1008: Does R know which party had most members in the Senate before the election?
v1009: Does R know, as a result of the election, which party has the most members in the Senate?

1988
v302: Government services/spending*
v310: Defence spending*
v318: Government health insurance*
v323: Job assurance*
v332/v340: Aid to blacks/Aid to minorities*
v368: Co-operation with Russia*
v387: Women's rights*
v395: Abortion
v852: Laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination
v854: Capital punishment
v856: Affirmative action in hiring and promotion
v869: Black student quotas

Political Knowledge
v871: Does R know job/office Ted Kennedy holds?
v872: Does R know job/office George Schultz holds?
v873: Does R know job/office William Rehnquist holds?
v874: Does R know job/office Mikhail Gorbachev holds?
v875: Does R know job/office Margaret Thatcher holds?
v876: Does R know job/office Yasser Arafat holds?
v877: Does R know job/office Jim Wright holds?
V878: Does R know which party had most members in the US House before the election?
V879: Does R know which party had most members in the Senate before the election?

1992
v3701: Government services/spending*
v3707: Defence spending*
v3718: Job assurance*
v3732: Abortion*
v3724: Government support of social and economic position of blacks
v3801: Women's rights
v5923: Laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination
v5925: Homosexuals serving in the army
v5927: Gay adoption
v5931: Government integration of schools
v5933: Capital punishment
v5935: Preferential hiring and promotion of blacks
v5945: School prayer
v5947: Black student quotas

Political Knowledge
v5916: Does R know job/office Dan Quayle holds?
v5917: Does R know job/office William Rehnquist holds?
v5918: Does R know job/office Boris Yeltsin holds?
v5919: Does R know job/office Tom Foley holds?

v5920: Who has the final responsibility to decide the constitutionality of law?
v5921: Who nominates judges to the federal courts?
v5951: Does R know which party had most members in the US House before the election?
v5952: Does R know which party had most members in the Senate before the election?

1996
v450: Government services/spending*
v463: Defence spending*
v479: Government health insurance*
v483: Job assurance*
v487: Aid to blacks*
v503: Abortion*
v519: Crime reduction*
v523: Jobs vs. environment*
v537: Environmental regulation*
v543: Women's rights*
v1193: Laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination
v1195: Homosexuals serving in the army
v1197: Capital punishment
v1208: Affirmative action in hiring and promotion
v1217: Gun control

Political Knowledge
v1072: Does R know which party had most members in the US House before the election?
v1073: Does R know which party had most members in the Senate before the election?
v1189: Does R know job/office Al Gore holds?
v1190: Does R know job/office William Rehnquist holds?
v1191: Does R know job/office Boris Yeltsin holds?
v1192: Does R know job/office Newt Gingrich holds?

2000
Face-to-Face Respondents
v545: Government services/spending*
v581: Defence spending*
v615: Job assurance*
v641: Aid to blacks*
v674: Affirmative action
v694: Abortion*
v707a or
v000707b: Jobs vs. Environment*
v724: Homosexuals serving in the military
v731: Gun Control*
v748: Gay adoption
v749: Capital punishment
v754a or
v000754b: Women's rights*
v771: Environmental regulation*
v1478: Laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination

Phone Respondents
v550: Government services/spending*
v587: Defence spending*
v620: Job assurance*
v645: Aid to Blacks*
v674: Affirmative action
v694: Abortion*
v713: Jobs vs. Environment*

v724: Homosexuals serving in the military
v731: Gun control*
v748: Gay adoption
v749: Capital punishment
v760: Women's rights*
v776: Environmental regulation*
v1478: Laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination

Political Knowledge
v1356: Does R know which party had most members in the US House before the election?
v1357: Does R know which party had most members in the Senate before the election?
v1447: Does R know job/office Trent Lott holds?
v1450: Does R know job/office William Rehnquist holds?
v1453: Does R know job/office Tony Blair holds?
v1456: Does R know job/office Janet Reno holds?